

USING THE INTERNET TO FIND INFORMATION ABOUT HISTORICAL MEETING MEMBERS

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Researching the names of those interred in our Meeting's Burial Ground (BG) has been very educational; at this point I am still a beginner and am still making discoveries. I don't know when someone becomes "expert," and I suspect I may never get there.

Simply Googling a name is seldom very useful, because you get swamped with modern people with the same name; a useful site may be there, but it might be the hundredth or the thousandth site in line, and it can take an awfully long time to find it.

On the other hand, the best information, generally, is that from a full-blown genealogy of a family, since these tend to be carefully researched. There are very few that have been digitized and made available to the internet scholar, however, and those that are available can be very tedious and difficult to explore. Still, it's always worth Googling "[Surname], family genealogy," and once there, using the FIND function with the individual names you are interested in.

Certain websites prove very useful; on the BG list, I annotate several as sources: **Rweb**, **Rash**, and **Anc**, for instance.

Rweb. The RootsWeb website, for instance, provides a Quaker-specific site that is especially useful because it incorporates membership information; it also provides descendancies (downward-looking) and family trees (upward-looking). It gives parentage, marriages and children in convenient format. It is, like ALL genealogical websites, subject to errors, sometimes whoppers. On the other hand, it references the membership information, although this does not mean that information is always correct. In Rweb, this information derives from William Wade Hinshaw's *Encyclopedia of American Quaker Genealogy, Vol I-VI, 1607-1943* published between 1936 and 1950. Hinshaw notes in the forward that meetings for business noted births, deaths, marriages, disownments (and reinstatements) and transfers of membership (from one MM to another) more or less regularly, but by no means completely, so that even if the information was gobbled up perfectly, it would still be unknowably incomplete. And of course, these handwritten records were accessed by hand and read individually by many different researchers in the days very much prior to digital access. Some mistakes must be expected. Still, this is the best we can do. Hinshaw indicates that the most reliable and most complete information is that relating to marriages. The reason for this is simple: Friends had a whole bunch of rules relating to marriage "under the care of" a meeting, each of which required reporting to monthly meeting for business (MMB) for approval. Few such marriages, then, slipped through without multiple documentation. Marriages outside of these confines often found their way into the minutes because failure to follow these rules was easily the most common reason for an individual to be read out of meeting, which event was accomplished in MMB. Hinshaw noted also that records of death were the least complete, and records of birth intermediate. Records of transfer were between birth and marriage, since they require MMB action, but only twice (once for each meeting involved).

Membership in Friends was then (and still is now) through the agency of the monthly meeting (MM). If you wished to become a friend in a local group of meeting Quakers, or a Preparative Meeting, your membership application had to go to the MMB of the MM of your

local meeting's area. For most of the nineteenth century, Germantown Meeting was a preparative meeting, GPM, under the care of Frankford MM (FMM). So until 1906, when Germantown Preparative Meeting became a Monthly Meeting (GMM), all Germantown membership was in FMM. Thus Germantown Meeting children were "born in" FMM (i.e., their births were reported to MMB of FMM), or our members "died in" FMM (again, their deaths were reported to MMB of FMM).

I find the Quaker part of the website challenging to access, however, which is why I provide a very specific address:

<http://wc.rootsweb.ancestry.com/cgi-bin/igm.cgi?op=SHOW&db=gjohnston3&surname>

Sometimes I would enter a name and find that Rweb didn't have that name—Ruth Reeve, for instance. Eventually, I discovered that all people with that surname were listed under "Reeves." In a similar way, all Rhoads family members will find themselves under "Rhodes." These are surely disquieting (iniquitous may be a better word) facts about the database, but you use what is there. In the BG Membership list I've included the Rweb spelling when it varies from the "true." (I.e., to show that Jonathan Evans Rhoads is found in Rweb, my entry will say: JER Rweb "Rhodes")

The nature of the membership information comes in several forms. It is easiest to illustrate these with an example, using the entry for Fothergill Ogborn (#4)¹.

? Name: Fothergill OGBORN

? Sex: M

? Birth: 14 JUN 1795 in Mt. Holly, Burlington, New Jersey ¹

? Death: 13 JAN 1861 in Frankford, PA ²

? Note:

RESIDENCE: Received at Burlington MM from Upper Evesham MM in 1818; Family granted certificate from Burlington MM to Frankford MM in 1824. Certificate not received and another one sent later in year; Family received at Phila MM SD from Frankford MM in 1826; Family granted certificate from Phila MM SD to Frankford MM in 1829;

DEATH: Died ae 66 yrs;

Father: [Caleb OGBORN, Jr.](#) b: 1758

Mother: [ANN](#)




Marriage 1 [Sarah W. OWEN](#) b: 1799

- Married: 1819 in Burlington, Burlington, New Jersey ³

Children

1. [Susanna F. OGBORN](#) b: 3 SEP 1819
2. [William Elwood OGBORN](#) b: 8 APR 1823
3. [Martha C. OGBORN](#) b: 7 MAR 1825 in Frankford, PA
4. [Sarah Ann OGBORN](#) b: 16 JAN 1828 in Frankford, PA

¹ The # sign indicates that this is the BG number in the BG Register.

5. [Anna Belle C. OGBORN](#) b: 9 NOV 1829 in Frankford, PA
6. [Elizabeth Pitfield OGBORN](#) b: 25 AUG 1831 in Frankford, PA
7.  [Emmaline OGBORN](#) b: 17 DEC 1833 in Frankford, PA
8. [Mary M. OGBORN](#) b: 27 JUL 1834 in Frankford, PA
9. [Phebe OGBORN](#) b: 7 FEB 1836 in Frankford, PA
10. [Annabella C. OGBORN](#) b: 7 SEP 1837 in Frankford, PA
11. [James OGBORN](#) b: 27 MAR 1839 in Frankford, PA
12.  [Morris OGBORN](#) b: 3 JAN 1842 in Philadelphia MM ND, Pennsylvania
13.  [Rachel P. OGBORN](#) b: 29 DEC 1843 in Frankford, PA

Sources:

1. Wm. Wade Hinshaw's Index to New Jersey Quaker Records, Indexed by Selby Pub. & Print. Co., Mt. Holly MM, Vol. II, pg. 72;
2. Wm. Wade Hinshaw Index to Pennsylvania Quaker Records, Vol. III, Frankford MM Records, published by Selby Publishing & Printing, pg.72;
3. Hinshaw, William Wade, Ency. of Amer. Quaker Gen. Vol. 2 pg. 246, Burlington Records. Married out of unity;

In the above entry, birth and death are referenced to the relevant MM records. When it says his birth was in Mt. Holly it means he was born a Birthright member of Mt Holly MM (of Burlington QM). Furthermore, it means both his parents were members in good standing as well, a requirement for being allowed the Birthright Friend status.

The term “RESIDENCE” in these entries actually means which MM you belonged to, not where you lived. Most of the entries for residence tracked the certificates that went from one MM to another when members switched meetings, as recorded in Meeting for Business (MB). Note that the family as a whole had a certificate for their move to Germantown in 1824, and how their children after 1824 all were “born in” FMM². What happened to the first two, however? Why were they not born “in Burlington”?

You can see at the end of footnote 3 a sentence fragment, “Married out of unity;”; this strongly suggests that the compiler intended to write a RELIGION entry with this as its footnote: that Fothergill had been disowned by Burlington MM for marriage out of unity—usually this meant marrying someone not a Friend. Checking Sarah’s page, we discover, in her RELIGION entry, that she applied for membership to Burlington in 1820, the year after they married. So there is the disunity; she was not a member. The surprising thing is that in Fothergill’s page her whole name is given. Much more commonly in this circumstance, the spouse who is not a member was given only a first name (e.g., “SARAH”), or no name at all (“UNKNOWN”—even though those attending MMB knew the name perfectly well. Her not being a member accounts also for their first child not being Birthright. What about the second? Her entry says she applied in 1820, and she was most likely accepted promptly. However, Fothergill himself would not be a member until he wrote a letter acknowledging that he did wrong, and asked for reinstatement. Many members who were read out of their meeting found this a very difficult thing to do. That he allowed Sarah to apply for membership strongly suggests that he intended to request

² Membership in Friends was NOT in the yearly meeting—PYM—but in the monthly meeting. Germantown at this time was a preparative meeting, GPM, under the care of Frankford Monthly Meeting (FMM), so membership in GPM was recorded at MB of FMM. GPM became its own monthly meeting—GMM—in 1906. See *Clara Pastorius and the Roots of our Meeting*.

reinstatement, but kept putting it off even to the point that their second child was born not a Birthright Friend. But Fothergill did get his memberships in order by 1824, for otherwise they could not have received that family certificate of transfer. Then, prior to their move to Germantown, they applied for memberships for the two children in Burlington MM, so they could be included in the family certificate of transfer. Memberships can drive you crazy.

Rash. The **Pennock** website surname index (www.pennock.ws/surnames/) is my preferred site for information, especially with respect to dates. It is not exclusively Quaker, but predominantly so. Entering through Rash's Surname Index, you select the surname initial letter, then the surname, arriving at a potentially long list, in alphabetical order, of all those with that surname, selecting which you want. Sometimes, the process can be shortened by Googling a married pair, with the term Pennock. For example, in the example below, Googling "Solomon Jones, Mary Comfort, Pennock" may get you more directly to the correct entry (but this doesn't always work, while approaching through Rash does always work. Rash/Pennock is not complete, by any means. Fothergill is not here (no Ogborns are listed). But looking up Solomon Jones (#1) we get the typical entry:

Husband: **Solomon JONES**

Born: 30 JUN 1783	at: Cheltenham Twp., Montgomery Co., Pa.
Married: 12 NOV 1806	at: Falls MM, Bucks Co., Pa.
Died:	at:
Father: Jonathan JONES	
Mother: Hannah COLES	
Other Spouses:	

Wife: **Mary COMFORT**

Born: 11 FEB 1785	at: Falls Twp., Bucks Co., Pa.
Died:	at:
Father: Moses COMFORT	
Mother: Elizabeth Knight MITCHELL	
Other Spouses:	

CHILDREN




Name: Jonathan JONES	
Born: 6 NOV 1808	at: Bucks Co., Pa.
Married:	at:
Died: 8 DEC 1829	at: Bucks Co., Pa.
Spouses:	

Name: Josiah JONES	
Born: 25 JUL 1817	at: Cheltenham Twp., Montgomery Co., Pa.
Married: 6 JUN 1867	at: Philadelphia, Pa.
Died: 25 FEB 1892	at: Cheltenham Twp., Montgomery Co., Pa.
Spouses: Frances EDGE	

In the Pennock entries, any name that is underlined may be clicked on for its own page. Comparing it to Solomon's Rweb entry immediately tells us that the two websites must be drawing from different sources.

- ? Name: Solomon JONES
- ? Sex: M
- ? Birth: 1781
- ? Death: 31 JAN 1860 in Frankford, PA ¹
- ? Note: DEATH: Died ae 79 yrs;

Marriage 1 [Mary COMFORT](#) b: 1785
Children

1. [Jonathan C. JONES](#) b: 11 NOV 1808 in Frankford, PA
2.  [Sarah W. JONES](#) b: 31 JAN 1813 in Frankford, PA
3.  [Josiah JONES](#) b: 25 JUL 1817 in Frankford, PA
4. [Joseph JONES](#) b: 23 JAN 1821 in Frankford, PA
5. [Solomon JONES, Jr.](#) b: 9 SEP 1823 in Frankford, PA
6.  [George JONES](#) b: 26 DEC 1826 in Frankford, PA

First, they disagree on year of birth for Solomon: 1783 v 1781. Which is right? I am inclined to prefer the Rweb dates when I know they come from MB minuted records, but that does not apply here. The birth date is not referenced, and there is no indication that he was born into any meeting. So who knows where that 1781 comes from. The virtue of the Rash/Pennock date is that it is complete. Generally I favor complete dates over incomplete, and 1834 over c1834.

Second, the list of children differs dramatically from two in one to six in the other. It is easy to account for this: Rash/Pennock did not use meeting records as its source (I don't know what its source is, actually). This will turn out to be a common problem for Rash/Pennock: incomplete lists of children.

Third, the information about birth locations differ for the two children listed in Rash/Pennock: Jonathan was born in Bucks County and Josiah in Montgomery County according to Rash, and in Frankford per Rweb. It is clear that the location in Rash/Pennock is the physical location of birth—probably the parental home, while as noted before, the Rweb birthplace means monthly meeting of birth, so both may be correct.

Anc. Ancestry.com is a general genealogy site accessed by Googling a name coupled with "ancestry." E.g. "Fothergill Ogborn, Ancestry:"

Fothergill Ogborn

Born in **New Jersey, USA** on **1795** to [Caleb Ogborn](#) and [Ann Parker](#).
Fothergill married [Sarah Wills Owen](#) and had 11 children. He passed away on **1865** in **Pennsylvania, USA**.

Family Members

Parents

[Caleb Ogborn](#)
[1755-1788](#)

[Ann Parker](#)
[1759-1841](#)

Spouse(s)

[Sarah Wills Owen](#)
[1800-1870](#)

Children

[Elwood Ogborn](#)
[Susanna F Ogborn](#)
[1825-Unknown](#)

[William Ogborn](#)
[1827-Unknown](#)

[Emma Ogborn](#)
[1832-Unknown](#)

[Elizabeth Ogborn](#)
[1831-Unknown](#)

[Mary Ogborn](#)
[1836-Unknown](#)

[Phebe Ogborn](#)
[1835-Unknown](#)

[James Ogborn](#)
[1839-Unknown](#)

[Anna B Ogborn](#)
[1840-Unknown](#)

[Morris Ogborn](#)
[1842-1892](#)

[Rachel P Ogborn](#)
[1843-1921](#)

This website seems to draw on yet another source of information, gaining more about Fothergill's parents, for instance, than did Rweb, but agreeing with the dates of birth of the children in only four cases (out of thirteen). The greatest strength of Ancestry is its relative richness in knowing the parents of individuals (as in Fothergill's case), so that I would often pilot my way backward through time in Ancestry, and then work out details on other sites.

Geni, accessed by coupling a name with Geni (e.g., "Henry Ferris, 1855-1941, Geni") was a site I could use to look for confirmatory information, and occasionally the only site featuring an individual (such as Henry, here).

Henry Ferris, Sr.

Birthdate: August 16, 1855

Birthplace: Rancocas, Westampton, Burlington, NJ,

USA

Death: Died January 5, 1941 in Philadelphia,
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, United States

Immediate Family: Son of [David Ferris](#) and [Sarah Ann Ferris](#)
Husband of [Elizabeth Ellis Ferris](#)
Father of [Henry Ferris, Jr.](#) and [Frances Canby Ferris](#)

Wikitree, accessed by coupling a name with Wikitree (e.g., “James Fyfe, Wikitree”) occasionally provided information I could find nowhere else.

James Fyfe (1877 - 1946)

Born **13 Jul 1877** in **Dundee, Angus, Scotland** ?

Son of [James Fyfe](#) and [Jane \(Unknown\) Fyfe](#)

Brother of [John Fyfe](#), [William Fyfe](#) and [David Fyfe](#)

Husband of **Jessie Rait (Kinnear) Fyfe** — married [date unknown] [location unknown]

DESCENDANTS 

Father of [Janetta Leslie \(Fyfe\) Teker](#), [Christina Kinnear \(Fyfe\) Irmer](#), [Leslie Davidson Fyfe](#), [James Emlen Fyfe](#) and [John Fyfe](#)

Died **24 Jan 1946** in **Philadelphia, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, USA** ?

Findagrave is another occasionally useful website accessed by Googling a name followed by “findagrave.” This will tell you where an individual is buried, together with family information, whose names you can click on for additional information about them, and so on.

Myheritage, another occasionally useful site, also accessed by pairs of names, such as “John Copithorne, Josephine Bemrose, myheritage”:

[John William \(Jack Shaun\) Copithorne, 1908 - 1965](#)

John William (Jack Shaun) Copithorne was born on month day 1908, to Thomas Copithorne and Francis (Crissy) Copithorne (born Buchanan).

Thomas was born in 1865.

Francis was born on August 15 1875.

John had 5 siblings: Cecil James (Jim) Copithorne, Irene Hollinshead (born Copithorne) and 3 other siblings.

John married Josephine Copithorne (born Bemrose) on month day 1938, at age 30.

Josephine was born on November 2 1901.

John passed away on month day 1965, at age 56.

With so many sites devoted to genealogical information, you might think that pretty much everyone can be found somewhere—and you may be surprised, then, at how many people on the list of burials I code “no entry:” I looked everywhere, and just couldn’t find them.

Please: if you find someone whom I could not, let me know!